

ATMORE-HOLMAN PRISON COLLECTION

Historical Note: The Prison/Prisoners' Rights Movement (1960s-1970s) grew in response to the growing number of people confined in US jails and prisons, and national and international movements for self-determination and human rights. Especially in Alabama's prison system, forced labor, dehumanizing conditions, and the disproportionate number of black people confined, represented to many the continuation of slavery under a different name.

Alabama's prisons were overcrowded and prisoners were routinely denied clean drinking water and eating utensils, while being subjected to violence and extended periods of solitary confinement. To call attention to their demands for improved conditions, prisoners organized as Inmates for Action (IFA), and engaged in work stoppages and strikes in Alabama's Atmore and Holman prisons. IFA also led classes for prisoners on subjects such as Revolutionary Theory and Black History. In response to prisoner activism, prison guards tortured and murdered IFA leaders Chagina (George Dobbins), Yukeena (Tommy Dotson) and Frank X. Moore. Guards continued to deny access to necessities, and attempted to repress continued organizing among the prisoners. Outside of prison, the Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB) and the Atmore-Holman Defense Committee planned demonstrations, and assisted with legal strategy in support of IFA.

In a 1977 court decision, conditions in Alabama prisons were declared unconstitutional in violation of the 8th amendment's protection against cruel and unusual punishment. Organizing within and outside of prison walls continued as it became clear that Alabama's prisons were not complying with the court order to improve conditions.

Content Description: The Atmore-Holman Prison collection documents efforts from 1969 to the late 1970's to improve conditions in Alabama prisons, and to shed light on the murders of Inmates for Action (IFA) leaders Chagina (George Dobbins), Yukeena (Tommy Dotson) and Frank X. Moore. It includes flyers, newspapers, newsletters, strategy papers, legal documents, press releases, photographs and extensive correspondence related to IFA, and the organizations supporting their work such as the Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB) and the Atmore-Holman Defense Committee. It also includes reports related to the broader issues of grassroots organizing in the South, among prisoners, students and workers.

Organizations: Afrikan Peoples Survival Committee, Black Panther Party (BPP), Atmore-Holman Brothers Defense Committee, Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB), Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF), Inmates for Action (IFA), Dotson-Dobbins Legal Action Fund, Families For Action

People: Steve Whitman, Yukeena (Tommy Dotson), Chagina (George Dobbins), Mafundi (Richard Lake), Gamba Mani (Oscar Johnson), Karl Schaffer, Frank X. Moore, Sue Wallace, Carrie Bush, William Baxley, George Wallace

Subjects: Prison, Human Rights, Racism, Education, Death Penalty, Labor, Unions, Anti-Racism, Anti-Imperialism, Police, Civil Rights

FOLDER 001: Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB)

Keywords: Steve Whitman, Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB), police, police harassment, Atmore-Holman prison, Alabama, Attica, William Baxley, George Wallace, Inmates For Action (IFA), prison conditions, Families For Action, racism, Black Panther Party (BPP), Grand Jury, Mafundi (Richard Lake), Carrie Bush, Sue Wallace

Description: Legal documents, correspondence, leaflets, organization statements, goals, and general information surrounding the work of the Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB). Materials cover the arrest of Mafundi (Richard Lake), the death of prisoner and Inmates for Action (IFA) leader Frank X. Moore, call to arrest Alabama politician William Baxley, and more.

FOLDER 002: The Great Rebellion Come (A Love-Movement Ballad) / Freedom Chorale

Keywords: prisoners' rights, Frank X. Moore, National Lawyers Guild (NLG), student activism

Description: 6" vinyl record, 1975, with songs written by Trevor Bilmes in support of Inmates for Action (IFA) and the Atmore-Holman Brothers.

FOLDER 003: Fivers

Keywords: Inmates for Action (IFA), Frank X. Moore, Atmore-Holman Brothers, Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB), William Baxley, Ku Klux Klan (KKK), racism

Description: Pamphlets and flyers calling for the immediate release of political prisoners, better prison conditions, and to assemble in protest against the unjust conditions and murders of prisoners in Alabama as well as nationwide. Many advocate against the trial outcomes of murdered prisoners such as Yukeena (Tommy Dotson) and Frank X. Moore. Others offer movies and discussions to further the public's awareness.

FOLDER 004: Imani (Johnny Harris)

Keywords: Imani (Johnny Harris), Steve Whitman, Alabama, death penalty, Birmingham Alliance, Ashoki, Sister Susan, Linda Parrell

Description: Correspondence, legal strategy and other documents relating to Alabama prisoner, Imani's (Johnny Harris) death penalty conviction.

FOLDER 005: Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB) Newsletters

Keywords: violence against prisoners, murder, racism, prisoner conditions, Atmore-Holman Brothers, Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB)

Description: Contains issues 1-7 of the Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB) Newsletters from 1974-1975. Articles focused on prison violence and murder, racism, general prisoner conditions and experiences, letters to the press, the case of the Atmore-Holman Brothers, and more.

FOLDER 006: News Clippings and Articles

Keywords: Yukeena (Tommy Dotson), Inmates for Action (IFA), Atmore-Holman Brothers, prison conditions, George Wallace, Alabama, murder, racism, Mafundi (Richard Lake), Atmore-Holman Prison, Chagina (George Dobbins), Carrie Bush

Description: News clippings and articles with a central focus on the prison conditions in Alabama, specifically at the Atmore-Holman prison, as well as legal cases involving prisoners or relatives of murdered prisoners.

Contents include the following:

- Birmingham Post-Herald 5/21/unknown
- Birmingham Post-Herald 11/18/1975
- Kaleidoscope November 20, 1975
- Liberation News Service #675 February 5, 1975
- Muhammad Speaks June 6, 1975
- New American Movement May 1976
- Press Register November 2, 1975
- Southern Patriot Vol. 32-7 September 1974
- Southern Patriot Vol. 32-8 October 1974
- Southern Patriot Vol. 32-9 November 1974
- Southern Patriot Vol. 33-1 January 1975
- Southern Patriot March 1974
- The Nation June 21, 1975
- Turning Point Vol. 2-3 Nov-Dec 1974
- Workers World Vol. 17-6 February 7, 1975
- Workers World May 9, 1975
- Workers World Vol. 17-24 June 1975
- Workers World January 30, 1976
- Workers World February 21, 1975
- Workers World March 14, 1975
- Workers World March 19, 1976

FOLDER 007: Job Placement Programs

Keywords: prison, labor, Atmore-Holman Prison, Steve Whitman

Description: Correspondence between the Law Offices of Sirote, Permutt, Friend and Friedman, and Steve Whitman while working to establish a job placement program for Alabama prisoners after they're released. Also includes a document on the "statistical procedure for the detection and demonstration of irregularities" in prisoners, essentially calculating if they are viable for joining the workforce.

FOLDER 008: Atmore-Holman Trials

Keywords: Atmore-Holman prison, Atmore-Holman Defense Committee, Yukeena (Tommy Dotson), Chagina (George Dobbins), racism, murder, prison conditions, William Baxley, Oscar Johnson, segregation, Inmates For Action (IFA), Alabama, violence against prisoners, Sue Wallace, Carrie Bush

Description: Excerpts from transcripts of the trials regarding the Atmore-Holman Brothers, primarily regarding the murders of Yukeena (Tommy Dotson) and Chagina (George Dobbins). Also includes correspondence, memoranda, fliers and articles from legal offices, news outlets, and the Atmore-Holman Brothers Defense Committee.

FOLDER 009: Envelope of photos, John's Photo Service

Keywords: Steve Whitman, Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB), police brutality, police harassment, police, protest, photographs, Alabama, Racism, demonstration

Description: Photos taken by Steve Whitman of the Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB) of a protest against police brutality in Birmingham, Alabama in the mid-1970s.

FOLDER 010: Atmore-Holman Brother Defense Committee

Keywords: Atmore-Holman Brothers Defense Committee, Atmore-Holman prison, prison conditions, murder, racism, Inmates for Action (IFA), Gamba Mani (Oscar Johnson), Mafundi (Richard Lake), Yukeena (Tommy Dotson), Chagina (George Dobbins), Frank X. Moore, Alabama, New York City, National Lawyers Guild (NLG), Afrikan People's Survival Committee, police brutality, police harassment, Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB), Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF), Steve Whitman, police violence, police harassment, Deep South, Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), lynching, grand jury

Description: Pamphlets, newsletters, reports, official grievances, sponsor papers, correspondence, meeting minutes and newspaper clippings by and surrounding the Atmore-Holman Brothers Defense Committee. Also includes program details of Inmates for Action (IFA) and their struggle for better prison conditions in Alabama.

FOLDER Oil: Dobbins-Dotson Murders

Keywords: Atmore-Holman Brothers Defense Committee, Atmore-Holman prisons, prison conditions, murder, racism, Inmates for Action (IFA), Gamba Mani (Oscar Johnson), Mafundi (Richard Lake), Yukeena (Tommy Dotson), Chagina (George Dobbins), Frank X. Moore, Alabama, Black Panther Party (BPP)

Description: Press releases, articles, correspondence, program statements, and legal documents about the efforts of members of Inmates for Action (IFA) and other organizations discussing the murders of two IF A leaders, Chagina (George Dobbins) and Yukeena (Tommy Dotson). Also includes autopsy papers and filed complaints on the outcome of their trials, as well as newspaper articles by Workers World, Birmingham Times, and the Black Panther Party Newspaper.

FOLDER 012: Press Materials

Keywords: Atmore-Holman Brothers Defense Committee, Atmore-Holman prison, prison conditions, murder, racism, Inmates for Action (IFA), Gamba Mani (Oscar Johnson), Mafundi (Richard Lake), Yukeena (Tommy Dotson), Chagina (George Dobbins), Frank X. Moore, Alabama, Karl Schaffer

Description: Press releases (predominantly by the Atmore-Holman Brother Defense Committee and the Inmates for Action (IFA)).

FOLDER 013: Grassroots Organizing in the South

Keywords: Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF), trade unions, classism, racism, South Carolina, North Carolina, the South, segregation, working class, education, Alabama, labor, Miner's Strike, Communism, Sharecroppers, Worker's Rights, Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), civil rights, organizing, Ku Klux Klan (KKK), Black Panther Party (BPP), Black People's Union Party (BPUP), prison, West Virginia, Civil War, Reconstruction, the Knights of Labor, the American Federation of Labor, CIO, race, electoral politics, academic freedom, women's liberation movement, Appalachia, exploitation, anti-imperialism, NAACP, Henderson Strike, police, repression, Chapel Hill, murder

Description: Contains documents about grassroots organizing efforts throughout the south, including a report about the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), "The Right to Organize: How North Carolina tries to wreck people's movements" by Carl Braden, a transcription of a talk on labor history called "The Roots of Class Struggle in the South", and a report called "The Lessons of Laurel: Grass-Roots Organizing in the South" by Robert Analavage and Dottie Zellner.

FOLDER 014: Alabama Prisons

Keywords: Alabama, prison, Committee for Prisoner Support in Birmingham (CPSB), murder, prison conditions, racism, US Constitution, civil rights, prison labor, medical, food, visiting, prison conditions, prison abolition, prisoner rights, sentencing

Description: Documents dated 1973-1976 about the state of Alabama's prison system, including "The Alabama Prison System: Recent History, Conditions and Recommendations" by Allen E. Tullos, a report called "Alabama Prisons" published by the Alabama Advisory Committee, and the federal ruling declaring the Alabama prison system in violation of the constitution.

FOLDER 015: "Free the Atmore-Holman Brothers" Buttons

Keywords: Atmore-Holman Brothers, prison

Description: Four 2" wide buttons with the words "Free the Atmore-Holman Brothers" showing the words "Atmore-Holman" as appearing behind prison bars.

FOLDER 16: Miscellaneous – Ronnie Williams / Claude and Joyce Williams + Wilmington 10

FOLDER 17: National Freedom March / Rally for Human Dignity

FOLDER 18: Mafundi Defense Committee

FOLDER 19: FBI Files